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## 硕 士 学 位 论 文

**Functional Approaches and Drama Translation for the Stage:**

**A Case Study of Two Versions of *Death of a Salesman***

功能翻译理论和以演出为目的的戏剧翻译  
——基于《推销员之死》两个中译本的个案分析

张 亚 丽

指导教师姓名: 纪 玉 华 教 授

专 业 名 称: 英 语 语 言 文 学

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## Synopsis

For a long time, drama translation, especially drama translation for the stage, has not received due attention from scholars in the field of translation studies. Literary translators tend to equate drama translation with literary translation in a general sense, which obscures the dual nature of drama translation, namely, readability and performability. Even those few translation theorists who are interested in drama translation per se are still debating on whether readability or performability should be used as the most important criterion by which the quality of drama translation is evaluated. The author of this thesis believes that Functional Approaches to translation can shed light on the debate and discussion concerning standards of drama translation for different purposes. The present thesis is an attempt to explore the implications of Functional Approaches for drama translation. The hypothesis of this research is that Functional Approaches can inspire and guide translators in their practice of drama translation. To support this hypothesis, this author conducts a contrastive study of two Chinese versions of *Death of a Salesman*, one of which was translated by Ying Ruocheng and the other by Chen Liangting.

The thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is a brief introduction to the background of this study, the objective of this research and the organization of this thesis. Chapter Two begins with a brief survey of the relevant literature on theoretical researches in drama study and practice in drama translation both at home and abroad. Distinct features that differentiate drama translation from literary translation in a general sense, such as linguistic features and other features, are discussed. Chapter Three begins with an introduction to the background of the Functional Approaches. In the West, two researchers on drama translation have carried out significant and influential studies which boosted the recognition of Functional Approaches by translation theorists and practitioners. One is Eugene Nida, who formulates “equivalence theory”; the other is Peter Newmark, who proposes “communicative translation theory”. The latter part of this chapter is devoted to discussions on such concepts as “*skopos*”, “aim”, “purpose”, “intention”, “function”, relations between “intratextual coherence” and “intertextual coherence”, “culture”, “culture-specificity”,

“role of text classification”, and “function plus loyalty”. Chapter Four focuses on a case study. Hypothesizing that performability is the most important criterion in evaluating drama translation, the author conducts a contrastive study of the aforementioned Chinese versions of *Death of a Salesman* translated, respectively, by Ying Ruocheng and Chen Liangting. The contrastive study is carried out with special attention to the following aspects of drama translation: culture-specific items, metaphors and similes, colloquialism, and actability. The last part of this thesis is a summary of this research. The contribution of this study to the research on drama translation is the rationalization of the suggestion that translators should cooperate with experts on performance so as to produce high-quality drama translations with greater suitability for performance on the stage.

**Key words:** drama translation; Functional Approaches; *Death of a Salesman*



## 摘要

长期以来,戏剧翻译,尤其是以舞台演出为目的的戏剧翻译,在翻译领域中一直没有受到学者们足够的关注。文学翻译家倾向于把戏剧翻译等同于一般意义上的文学翻译,这就混淆了戏剧翻译的双重性质,即可读性和可表演性。即便是有少数几位翻译理论家对戏剧翻译本身感兴趣,他们也还在是否应该把可表演性还是可读性作为戏剧翻译评价的最重要标准的问题上莫衷一是。本文作者认为,德国功能主义学派的翻译理论能为抱有不同目的的戏剧翻译工作者提供指导,从而消除关于戏剧翻译标准的疑惑。本文探索了德国功能主义翻译理论对于戏剧翻译的意义。本研究的假设是:德国功能主义翻译理论可以给予从事戏剧翻译的工作者以启迪和指导。为了验证这一假设,作者对比了《推销员之死》的两个中文版本,其中一个版本由英若成先生翻译,另一个版本由陈良廷先生翻译。

本文从四个章节展开论述。第一章简单介绍了该研究的背景、目的以及本文的结构。第二章先对中西方戏剧研究和戏剧翻译实践的有关文献进行简要综述,然后讨论戏剧翻译的一些特点,正是这些特点把戏剧翻译和一般意义上的文学翻译区别开来,如戏剧翻译的语言特点以及其他特点。第三章系统地介绍了德国功能主义翻译理论产生的背景。在西方戏剧翻译领域中,两位研究者进行了意义重大而且影响深远的研究工作,他们的研究提高了功能主义理论在翻译理论家和翻译工作者中的认可度。两位研究者中一位是尤金·奈达,他提出了对等翻译理论;另一位是彼得·纽马克,他提出了交际翻译理论。该章的后半部分对功能主义理论的主要概念,如 *skopos*, 目标、目的、意图、功能; 文内一致和文外一致原则的关系; 文化和文化专有性的概念; 文本分类的作用以及功能加忠诚原则等概念进行了讨论。第四章是案例研究部分。本文的假设是: 戏剧翻译应当以可表演性作为评价标准, 因此作者对比分析了分别由英若成先生和陈良廷先生翻译的《推销员之死》的两个中文版本。该对比分析从以下几个方面展开: 文化专有名词的翻译、比喻的翻译、语言的口语化和可表演性。最后一部分是本研究的总结。本文对戏剧翻译研究的贡献就是通过案例分析提出了一条建议, 即译者应该和表演系统的专家合作, 共同推出高水平的、更适合舞台演出的戏剧翻译作品。

**关键词:** 戏剧翻译; 功能主义学派; 《推销员之死》

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background of This Study

In the past few decades, scholars both at home and abroad have witnessed a boom not only in theorizing translation as an academic discipline but also in practice of translation as a profession. During the 1970s, scholars in the field of translation studies shifted their attention from the traditional dichotomy of translation, namely literal translation and free translation, to the equivalent translation whose theories were based on linguistic research. Then the concept of “cultural turn” jointly advocated by Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere (2001) came to scholars’ attention and gave impetus to heated discussions among translation theorists. Now translation studies have come to be regarded as an interdisciplinary endeavor characterized by constantly drawing upon new theories and findings from various fields of humanities and social sciences, such as hermeneutics, aesthetics, semiotics, anthropology, intercultural communication, socio-linguistics, and philosophy. However, for decades, translation studies have focused on literary translation while drama translation has received scant attention. Even though there was some research conducted in drama translation, such research was usually included in the sphere of literary translation. “There is very little material on the special problems of translating dramatic texts, and the statements of individual theatre translators often imply that the methodology used in the translation process is the same as that used to approach prose texts” (Bassnett, 1998: 119). However, though drama translation shares a lot in common with literary translation, it differs greatly from the latter. “In literary translation, for most of the cases, ‘faithfulness’ to the source text, both its form of expression and its form of content, is a norm” (Aaltonen, 2004). In drama translation, however, “faithfulness” has been given different meanings according to different contexts. If a dramatic text is translated with the purpose of simply introducing a new drama to target readers, then it may share more similarities with the translation of prose texts. Yet, the reality is that most drama translations are produced for the purpose of being performed on the stage. Drama translation, whose sole purpose it is to provide reading materials for enjoyment, such as the translation of the so-called “closet dramas”, will not be included in the

discussion of this thesis. In her *Translation Studies*, Susan Bassnett (1998: 119-120) clearly points out:

The dramatic text cannot be translated in the same way as the prose text. To begin with, a theatre text is read differently. It is read as something incomplete, rather than as a fully rounded unit, since it is only in performance that the full potential of the text is realized.

It is argued that the fact that most translators simply equate drama translation with literary translation of a general type results from the misconception that drama is merely a sub-genre of literature. Therefore, it is imperative, first of all, to obtain a clear understanding of what drama, as a genre of literature, really is.

According to *Oxford Dictionary of Theatre* (Hartnoll & Found, 1992), drama is a term applied loosely to the whole body of work written for the theatre, or to a group of plays related by their style, content, or period, such as Restoration drama, and realistic drama. Woodbridge's understanding of drama is also illuminating. He states that:

A drama is a representation of an action or closely linked series of actions, expressed directly by means of speech and gesture... Its subject matter is the action and reaction of human will, and it is treated with a view, not to the sequence of events, but to their essential relations as causes and effects. (Woodbridge, 1926: Preface)

A clear understanding of drama as a special literary genre helps contribute to a deeper understanding of drama translation. Though Woodbridge's statement is insightful, the author of this thesis prefers the definition given by Hartnoll and Found (1992).

## 1.2 Objective of This Study

The ultimate objective of this research is to shed light on standards of drama translation, especially drama translation for the stage, with Functional Approaches as the guiding principle. The author believes that Functional Approaches to translation can inspire and guide translators in their practice of drama translation. This thesis is also an attempt to call upon both translators and experts on drama performance to place due emphasis on collaboration in drama translation. It is the author's sincere wish that this will help produce more high-quality drama translations with greater suitability for performance on the stage.

## 1.3 Organization of This Thesis

The thesis consists of four chapters.



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